

Guard Your Time

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Limited time may be the biggest problem today's National Guard unit commander has to face. Traditionally, his training has included basic instruction in food service, supply and maintenance procedures, and leadership, as well as instruction in the areas of human relations and counseling. But it has not included training in how to control that most important resource — time.

The National Guard commander's mission of training and increased readiness is essentially the same one the commander of an Active Army unit has, but there is considerable difference between the two when it comes to the training time that is available. An Active Army unit trains an average of 240 days each year, eight hours per day, which amounts to about 2,000 hours a year. But counting weekend drills, annual training periods, and training development sessions, a National Guard unit can count on having only 320 training hours each year, which amounts to about one-sixth of the time available to the Active Army unit.

How does a conscientious National Guard commander overcome the limited amount of training time? The answer is simple: The majority of the key personnel in a National Guard unit must work overtime without extra pay to meet the deadlines and requirements.

There are certain time-management

principles a National Guard commander can use to help him accomplish his mission. The most important ones are these:

- **Delegate Responsibility.** A National Guard unit commander must delegate everything he possibly can to his subordinates. Although he must keep certain responsibilities and authority for himself — unit fund, career counseling, and the like — most of his duties can and should be delegated to his junior officers and NCOs.

- **Set Priorities.** A commander must set priorities and see that his subordinates understand them.

- **Handle Paper Only Once.** If a piece of correspondence comes across a commander's desk he should take care of it promptly and decisively. If suspense dates are involved, he must make certain they are met, but if a piece of correspondence does not need to be kept in the unit and if no action needs to be taken on it, then it should be discarded.

- **Make Lists.** Knowing that he has only one 16-hour drill period each month, he must structure his time in advance and should have the drill organized at least one day ahead. His lists should be arranged in chronological order, and the items on it should be ranked by their importance. He should encourage his subordinates to develop their own lists and to use them during the drill periods.

- **Keep Meetings Brief.** All his meetings should be kept short and to the point. Subordinate leaders, too, should be trained to conduct the business of the day without numerous or lengthy meetings. And the meetings that must be held should be conducted primarily to coordinate job assignments and training times.

Time-management should be made part of the training all National Guard unit commanders receive, and they, in turn, should use that training to develop the same skills in their subordinates.

If National Guard unit commanders will use the time available to them during weekend drill periods in the best way possible, and if they will accustom themselves to practicing good time-management principles, they can overcome the "limited time factor." In addition, they will be able to compete equally well with Active Army commanders in their concurrent missions and will be far better prepared to handle their duties if they are placed in an Active Army status.



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